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Title: *Self-referring Deformities: Humour in Early Modern Sermon Literature*

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Abstract:

Few studies have addressed comprehensively the place of jesting in early modern pulpit rhetoric. This essay documents some of the humour – jests and witty speech – in the period's extant sermon literature. Specifically it identifies the analytical potential of revisiting an ancient, and early modern, idea: that the laughable is a kind of *deformitas* (deformity). A standard approach in studies of humour from the early modern period has been to identify 'scorn' as its central emotional category. However, with reference especially to the sermons of Hugh Latimer in the 1540s and Thomas Adams in the first decades of the seventeenth century, I shall argue that scorn for what is deemed other, and therefore 'low', does not exhaust the range of affective rhetoric achieved by jests against 'deformities' in sermons. Pulpit jesting also generates what are called here 'self-referring' laughable deformities, with much more complex affective purposes.

Studies of sermons and sermon rhetoric in the early modern world have been given renewed scholarly attention in recent years.[1] While that is so, few studies have addressed the place of jesting in the literary remains of pulpit persuasion. What studies do exist have not considered fully the emotional and moral range instanced in English pulpit jesting nor considered the discourse of 'deformity' (*deformitas*) that was central to early modern thinking about what is laughable. I argue that the context and tone of English pulpit jests could range, from an othering scorn for common enemies (often Catholic) to what shall be called here 'self-referring' deformities.

Nor have any scholarly discussions considered how styles of pulpit jesting might be connected, even across the expanse of time from the early English reformation to the time of William Laud. The two book length studies related to the topic – Anselment's *'Betwixt Jest and Earnest'* and Horton Davies' *Like Angels from a Cloud* – focus primarily on or at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[2] Anselment's focus is on the limits of decorum while engaging in religious ridicule, while Davies focuses specifically on the wit of 'metaphysical' preaching. Jesting in sermons has had some attention by scholars of rhetoric, however, this has mostly focused on the preaching of Hugh Latimer (c.1485-1555) from the 1540s.[3] Moreover, while scholars have recognised that Thomas Adams, preaching in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, jested in a style reminiscent of Latimer, there has been little attempt to explore what is similar about their tone and style at the level of rhetorical structure.[4] Considering Adams's jesting in relation to Latimer's is important given the now-widespread recognition made by Keith Thomas that jesting in 'religious literature' becomes 'increasingly infrequent' after Latimer's time.[5] Davies addresses Adams in several places. However, his focus is on uncovering a rhetoric of metaphysical wit rather than showing the rhetorical means by which Adams uses jests, like Latimer, to exemplify points, to generate emotion, and to build community. An earlier generation of sermon scholarship, of the sort

primarily focused on historical narratives of style, merely made passing reference to Latimer, for instance, as 'pungent and racy'.[6]

Of course, there are several peculiar difficulties faced in the attempt to address jesting rhetoric in early modern sermons, not least the very accessibility of pulpit humour in the printed record. For one thing, sermons themselves were lively spoken performances, full of repetition and colloquialism, and yet were notably revised when they entered into the print versions we can now read.[7] Arnold Hunt shows that, in print, sermons became 'more intellectual, and less practical', 'less lively and less colourful'.[8] Print revisions also inevitably reflected a preacher's careful self-fashioning when addressing a much wider audience.[9] Furthermore, there was a fundamental category division in early modern discourse between the word of God as read and the word of God as preached (and thus heard), with a distinct preference for hearing. This meant that printed sermons were often thought of merely as an 'extension' of sermons preached, and, less positively, as just their weaker 'afterlife'.[10]

Notwithstanding the difficulty of finding and identifying humour in what is left of sermon performance, printed sermons did leave traces of jesting, that is, traces of what must have been a wide-ranging rhetorical skill, from the harshly derisive to the gently witty. Government records have revealed traces of salty jesting in the word of God as heard. For example, the comic antics of William Glibery in the pulpit eventually led to his being charged by some of his hearers for failing to use 'any sounde doctrine…whereby sin might be rooted out and the congregation profited and edified, but stuffeth his sermons with profane and wicked speaches': a description perhaps of Glibery's documented taste for humorous scatology, evident, for instance, in his indecorous reference to 'such as doe bepisse & becacke the gospell'.[11] Donne's friend Thomas Adams, (1583-1652), defends himself, in his sermon *The White Devill*, against objections to his jesting style:

> It is excepted, that I am too merry, in describing some vice. Indeed such is their [vices'] ridiculous nature, that their best conviction is derision; yet I abominate any

> pleasantnesse here, but Christian...wherein the gravitie of matter, shall free my forme of words from lightnes. Others say, I am other-where too Satyrically-bitter. It is partly confessed: I am bitter enough to the sins, and therin (I thinke) better to the sinners.[12]

Adams's defence of pulpit jesting not only preserves and complicates any distinction between seriousness and light-hearted humour. He also signifies two registers of jesting: merry description and satiric bitterness. There shall be occasion again to refer to Adams' defence.

This essay traces jesting in the printed texts of early modern sermons and compares their divergent rhetoric of jesting, with a view to understanding further the interrelation of theology, poetics, and power they embody. In particular, I will be concerned with the analytical potential of revisiting an ancient (and early modern) idea: that the laughable is a kind of *deformitas* (deformity). A standard approach, in studies of laughter and the laughable in early modernity, has been to identify 'scorn' as its central emotional category and 'contempt' as its predominant rhetorical stance.[13] However, I shall argue that modelling pulpit jesting as hierarchicalised scorn for what is deemed other and therefore 'low' does not exhaust the range of affective rhetoric achieved by jests in sermons. This is especially the case in the sermons of Hugh Latimer in the late 1540s, at an earlier stage of the English reformation when the ideological lines of English Protestantism were not so well established as they were later in the Jacobean period, during which Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), John Donne (1572-1631), and Joseph Hall (1574-1656) were preaching. Even across that expanse of time, from Latimer to the time of Andrewes, Donne, and Hall, similarities of rhetorical tone can be observed. Thomas Adams, a Calvinist Episcopalian and a contemporary of Donne's and Hall's, used in his sermons more complex jests than them, as did Latimer, jests which construct self-referring laughable deformities even in the midst of an othering anti-Catholicism. The tonal and rhetorical quality of self-referring jests is distinct from those deployed merely to confirm othering scorn for a common enemy.

Let us begin with the important distinction between serious discourse and the jest, the latter implicitly 'non-serious'. The distinction is a modern sociological one but it certainly mattered in the early modern period too.[14] Preachers, theologians, and writers of sermon manuals did want to preserve the difference between the gravely serious business of salvation, on the one hand, and the levity of mirth on the other. For one thing, the distinction structured their articulation of why religious ridicule could always be potentially indecorous: salvation was not a matter of mirth or pleasure. However, it is, for historians also, an important critical distinction. The very fact that pulpit jests announce themselves as light-hearted is precisely why their ideological shape must be interrogated. Adams's suggestion that 'the gravitie of matter, shall free my forme of words from lightnes' maintains the distinction yet at the same time suggests that his 'gravitie of matter' resides as much within his 'forme of words' as without, and further, that the same jesting words may embody both lightness and gravity. It is important therefore to ask where pulpit jesting fits within the difference between serious and non-serious forms of speech.

In order to approach that question I wish to foreground the discourse of 'deformity' in ancient and renaissance accounts of the laughable. Aristotle in the fifth chapter of the poetics had said that the laughable (or, *geloion*) is 'one category of the shameful (*aischros*)' involving 'any fault (*hamartêma)* or mark of shame (*aischros*) which involves no pain or destruction (*anôdunon*)'.[15] Cicero in *De Oratore* reiterates the same basic idea: the laughable (or, *ridiculus*) is 'that which may be described as unseemly or ugly' (*turpitudine et deformitate quadam*).[16] 'Deformitas' and 'turpitudo' become standard forms of reference in discussions of laughter during the cinquecento 'rediscovery' of Aristotle's *Poetics*, for instance, by Philosophers such as Vincentius Maddius (c.1498-c.1564) in his treatise *De Ridiculis* of 1550.[17] While explaining Aristotle's comments on the laughable, Maddius develops the idea that the laughable is a fault or a deformity, but emphasizes especially that it must be 'without pain' (*sine dolore*): an important phrase that will reappear in this discussion.[18]

Deformitas was a word that resonated with English writers of poetics manuals too, who were brought up on Cicero. For Thomas Wilson, 'the occasion of laughter…is the fondness, the filthiness, the deformity, and all such evil behavior as we see to be in another'.[19] Sidney's aristocratic opinion was that laughter almost always 'cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature', something that is 'only a scornful tickling'.[20]

As the example of William Glibery cited above shows, early modern preachers could make people laugh at unthreatening (*sine dolore*) ugliness or *deformitas* in comparatively anarchic ways. However, far from unleashing some carnivalesque pleasure in laughing to express desire for that which has been turned *into* a 'deformity' through repression, laughable deformity in sermons might just as easily be modelled as a reinforcement of pre-existing and well defined ideological concerns, precisely by exposing what the ideology constructs as deformed and by encouraging people to laugh *at* it. Ridiculing and punitive laughter like that can only come from a particular position: that is to say from the perspective of whatever normative forms are defining the laughably *de*formed.

It is possible to situate easily, in just that way, some of the pulpit jibes of such figures as Lancelot Andrewes, John Donne, and Joseph Hall, from the early decades of the seventeenth century. Protestantism had, by their time, become well established, and had acquired a clearer political (if a different ideological) shape than it had in Latimer's time. Mary Morrissey has drawn attention to the way that Paul's Cross sermons, at least, tend to assume Protestant sensibilities after about the 1580s in a manner that had not been so clear before.[21] The 'popish' had become more decidedly other.

Here are a few examples. In a sermon entitled 'The Defeat of Cruelty' preached at Whitehall on Psalm 68:30, Joseph Hall, the one-time satirist, speaks of Catholics as a 'credulous seduced multitude…bidden to adore a god, which they know the baker made', who 'fall down upon their knees, and thump their breasts; as beating the heart, that will not enough believe in that pastry-deity'.[22] In another context, he ridicules the veneration of relics,

as ‘worm-eaten monuments of the saints’, a veneration that involves respecting, alongside the son of God Himself, equally and ridiculously, ‘Francis’s cowl, Anna’s comb, Joseph’s breeches, Thomas’s shoe’.[23] At a certain point in his sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:29, preached at St Paul’s, June 21 1626, John Donne ridicules Tridentine Catholic exegesis by attacking Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, a key Counter-Reformation figure, for holding different opinions about purgatory before he was ‘hood-winked with his Hat’ – that is, before he received his Cardinalship.[24]

On the other hand, jibes were not just made at familiar Catholic others. Any number of anti-Puritan stage jokes will demonstrate that versions of Protestantism, too, could be constructed as laughable deformities, and just so in the pulpit. For example, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes points out, in a sermon on Matthew 3:7 before King James at Whitehall, 26 February 1623, that the English church in its reforming zeal overemphasizes the hearing of sermons: all is turned now, he says, to ‘auricular *pro*fession’ (for auricular *con*fession).[25] Bishop Andrewes here takes what his national church often problematized as a Catholic spiritual deformity (auricular confession) and wittily makes a laughable deformity out of what he sees as a Protestant over-emphasis on hearing the word of God (auricular profession).[26]

How can we model such jibes of Hall, Donne, and Andrewes? At one level, they are policing acts. They police the borders of the *via media Anglicana*, a national church that would see Protestant preaching balanced with preservation of the functions and rituals associated with the episcopate, steering a course between Catholicism and radical Puritanism. Their jest-policing might also be modelled within a hierarchical binary in which that which is othered is that which is low: the preacher draws his laughing congregation into a community formed around othering scorn for what is beneath them all, the de-formed. A binarizing model of scorn by the ‘high’ (that is, the socially empowered) for the ‘low’ (the disempowered), familiar from post-structuralist and new historicist scholarship, may offer a useful model for the jibes of Hall, Donne, and Andrewes.[27] Nonetheless, it does not exhaust

the rhetorical complexities of jesting evinced by Latimer and Adams, nor, quite, the renaissance theory about laughter's emotional and moral significance.

For one thing, renaissance theorists categorized a range of laughable deformities. Though Sidney emphasized the contrariety that laughter produces in us toward something 'disproportioned to ourselves and nature', other theorists were less emphatic and more descriptive. For instance, Maddius in *De Ridiculis*, identified a range of laughable things under the categories: bodily, mental, and extrinsic. Beyond congenital diseases and mental failures, laughable deformities, for Maddius, included accidental falls, long and debilitating habits, limits set by others, as well as total and inculpable ignorance. All such deformities are laughable because they are *sine dolore*, that is, they do not evoke in people, Maddius suggests, the same level of horror and pain as, for instance, civil war does. Maddius frames them in explicitly Platonic terms. They are declinations from *natura* and therefore from the full dignity of created perfection only conceivable above the sublunary sphere, not here below in the fallen world; Maddius unflinchingly lists hunchbacks as laughable for this reason – *not* because he delights in cruelty. In such cases, Maddius comes close to acknowledging that some 'deformities' can actually bring us toward the very pity that he and most others contrasted with the affect of laughter.

Furthermore, Maddius's notion of the laughable hesitates at the idea that laughter involves a total superiority over the 'deformed'. At a certain point, he qualifies a discussion of the limits of the laughable by suggesting that 'there is nothing under the sphere of the moon so perfect that it is free from all fault'.[28] There would seem to be no position, he implies, from which you could legitimately laugh with total superiority, or without at least the potential for self-reference.

Of course, this is implicit in both Plato's conception of the laughable and the Christian humanist literature that draws on it. In the *Philebus*, Plato associates what is laughable with ignorance (*agnoia*): a failure in particular respect to the Delphic injunction 'know thyself'

(*nosce teipsum*).[29] Christian humanist literature holding 'the mirror up to nature', as Hamlet puts it, also invites a *noscere teipsum* in respect to one's own possible *agnoia*.[30] In Erasmus's playful *Praise of Folly*, what counts as a laughable deformity or 'folly' in Erasmus's famous book depends on whether you look at it from a worldly wisdom that laughs at Christian priorities, or from a Christian 'wisdom' that laughs back at folly of the world.[31] As M.A. Screech notes, there is a reciprocality to this process: one kind of folly laughs at the other (*insanus insanum ridet*), and just so, one wisdom laughs at the other.[32] Such dialectical laughter encourages self-reference.

Further accounts question the predominance of scorn and superiority as the main model for sermon laughter. As an emotion, or an embodied *affectus*, laughter could be conceived on the same spectrum as anger, pity and disgust, even as it was distinguished from those emotions. For example, the anonymous author of a 1599 work of religious polemic, reflects on his situation thus: 'laughter and anger have strouven within mee which should prevaile, laughter verily, but that it is in such serious matter'.[33] Again, the author maintains a distinction between seriousness and laughter but complicates it with the image of tug-o-war where laughter is on the verge of sliding over into anger, disgust, and sorrow, a place that is not *sine dolore*. Laughter's *affectus* could also be conceived as a mixed state. The French physician Laurent Joubert's treatise on laughter *Traité Du Ris*, (1560) writes of 'laughable matter' that it 'gives us pleasure and sadness: pleasure in that we find it unworthy of pity, and that there is no harm done' but 'sadness, because all laughable matter comes from ugliness and impropriety'.[34] Such ideas, taken together, complicate the typical modelling of laughter theory across pre-modernity to the eighteenth century as a kind of 'superiority'.[35]

On such a basis, I now want to approach the preaching of Latimer and Adams not by conflating the distinction between the serious and the non-serious but by treating it more as an emotional spectrum than an either/or binary, in order to recategorise 'non-serious' laughter as the 'less painful' instead. I aim to move toward a model of jesting, in this case

pulpit jesting, in which it becomes a rhetorical function not merely conservative or anarchic but productive or contestative of impassioned moral communities.[36]

Latimer's sermons, and the jests I want to discuss, exemplify the crucial moral premium Latimer places on the role of preaching in what he imagines as a 'flourishing christian commonweal'.[37] This requires men and women to 'look to their duty' (70). However, what counts as 'duty', for the clergy especially, is shifting in Latimer's context. While preaching had been important in late medieval religion in England, during Latimer's lifetime preaching as a clerical task became more central to the protestant vision of the clergy's role, and took on a particular shape encapsulated in the phrase 'preaching Christ'.[38] Latimer's sermons are a part of those shifts. His preaching is often about preaching itself and seeks to inculcate his own Protestant vision of how the state religion, still very much in flux, might be steered towards a flourishing Christian commonwealth. In 1549, Latimer was complaining about what he called 'unpreaching prelates' (65), clergy who rake up benefices and titles and do none of the preaching work (and certainly not in the right way) that he and his fellow Protestants took to be central to the making of a visionary new commonwealth. His very complaints produce the idea of the rarity of good preaching before the Reformation.[39]

Latimer's jests are closely bound up with this process. They involve a comedy that cannot be reduced to a simple structure of superiority – with mere scorn or contempt as the outcome. This is for two reasons. First, the attacks on unpreaching prelates, whom Latimer also terms 'lording loiterers' (65), confront immanent deformities within the English commonwealth, not yet fully 'othered' as Roman. Second, Latimer's jests often implicate multiple members of the body politic, from king to clergy to laity, each with their potential deformities, as having responsibilities for the communal creation of a new Godly commonwealth. The laughable deformity Latimer produces for his audience's amusement has a way of circling back around on his audience and on himself.

A key example of this comes from a sermon preached before King Edward VI on April 12, 1549. Latimer develops his favourite theme: the importance of preaching and expounding the word of God. He takes for his text the early verse of Luke 5, in which Jesus teaches the crowd from a boat. On the topic of the people's motives for coming to hear Jesus, Latimer retells one of the *facetiae* from the *Hundred Merry Tales*, to emphasize the central importance of coming to sermons regardless of one's motive.[40]

> I had rather ye should come of a naughty mind to hear the word of God for a novelty, or for curiosity to hear some pastime, than to be away. I had rather ye should come as the tale is by the gentlewoman of London: one of her neighbours met her in the street, and said, "Mistress, whither go ye?" "Marry" said she, "I am going to St Thomas of Acres to the sermon; I could not sleep all this last night, and I am going now thither; I never failed of a good nap there." And so I had rather ye should go a napping to the sermons, than not to go at all. (201)

The object of laughter here may be as much the woman's sleepy indifference as the soporific preaching that has encouraged her attitude. Latimer creates both possibilities.

The woman in Latimer's laughable image embodies more than the will to sleep. She displays a blithe ignorance of what sermons are supposed to be about. Yet the deformity (from Latimer's Protestant perspective) that she reveals is not simply her fault. Latimer has only just been saying that preaching opens the doorway to salvation. The work of the Holy Spirit will not be helped by unpreaching prelates who refuse even to be engaging. The image of laughable deformity that the jest presents is an understandable failure if the preaching is boring enough. The woman is therefore not the sole object of blame and butt of the joke, nor presented as if she were simply lazy. Chris Holcomb's discussion of this example recognizes the two sides of the coin and suggests that Latimer wins points in a corrective rhetorical game regardless of how his audience takes the target: woman or preacher.[41] However, there is a further duality to be considered even within the preacher's side of that coin. To note this

further duality is to ask what Latimer's own relationship to the laughable deformity of this jest really is.

In evoking the image, Latimer implicitly identifies unengaging preaching (part of the laughable deformity) as contrary to himself – to borrow Sidney's words – and yet that contrariness is a self-referring kind of deformity nonetheless. This is because it embodies a level of potential failure that he and all preachers, in his view, can identify with. Holcomb partly acknowledges this duality of contrariness and identification for the preacher when he says that Latimer 'shows his ability to understand and see the world from the perspective of his listeners'.[42] To that observation I would add that what Latimer sees from his listeners' perspective is his own *potential* for (laughable) deformity. The joke embodies Latimer's own vulnerability even as it distances him from the deformity he is inviting laughter at. That is to say, the jest implicitly raises the question of his commensurability with an ideal form of preaching – even if it is never in any obvious doubt.

It is worth remembering, of course, that during the whole period under discussion the figure of the preacher himself, and the religious discourse he produced, could be the subject of jests exploring what constituted good preaching. For instance, Fox's *Acts and Monuments* records the story of Dr Taylor, who when forcibly dressed in popish "vestures", exclaims: 'if I were in cheap [Cheapside], should I not have boyes enough to laugh at these apish toyes…?'.[43] John Stow recorded a satirical note about an 'Assdeacon' of Essex he heard preaching at Paul's Cross in 1565, who had 'lykenyd the pristes unto appes, for, sayeth he, they be both balld alyke, but yt the pristes be balld before, the appes behynd'.[44] Several jests that explore the meaning of good preaching turn up in the manuscript jestbook of Sir Nicholas Le Strange (1603-1655).[45] For example, the one about a two-hour summer sermon commented upon later at dinner: 'twas a very good sermon, but halfe on't would have done well Cold'; another involved the 'Deane of Glocester' who showed 'some merry Divines' in his company how to reconcile the Fathers 'in all points of difference': he took

them into his study and showed them the Fathers ‘classically ordered with a quarte of Sacke betwixt each of them’.[46]

The whole scenario of Latimer’s sleepy-parishioner jest is endowed with a kind of distributed deformity, a systemic failure within a set of interlocking human habits that do not work, from Latimer’s Protestant perspective. If it is too much to say that the image produces an empathetic laughter, either for the woman or for the preacher, it is certainly designed at least to encourage various levels of self-criticism within the wider civic body. Scorn is a part of its meaning but not the only part.

A similarly complex duality is evident in the following example from the *Sermon of the Plough*, preached at St Paul’s on January 18, 1548. Castigating lording loiterers, he addresses the congregation with the following: ‘And now I would ask a strange question: who is the most diligentest bishop and prelate in all England, that passeth all the rest in doing his office?’ Latimer drags out the question, keeping the audience in suspense and hanging out for the answer. ‘Will ye know who it is? I will tell you: it is the devil’ (70). Thus follows the explanation: ‘He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his diocese; he is never from his cure…he is ever in his parish…call for him when you will he is ever at home; …no lording nor loitering can hinder him’ (70). This is no mere conventional weapon being slung at an obvious Catholic enemy. The image critiques practices of the English clergy relevant to the 1540s (as Latimer sees them), though, of course, he has Roman practices in mind as well: within a few pages we are reminded that the devil has a ‘chaplain’, ‘that Italian bishop yonder’ (74).

Latimer offers here a multilayered and quite complex mixed image of perhaps inseparably laughable and horrible deformity, depending on how much his laughers feel its pathos, *sine dolore*. It is not just that residual aspects of traditional church culture in England are associated with the ultimate cosmic deformity, the devil. At the same time, the devil becomes associated ‘positively’ (comically) with the very values Latimer is trying to inculcate:

a preaching prelacy that is educated, diligent, and devoted. So the image of existing community becomes laughably deformed in two ways: by simple association with the devil, and also by a more complex dissociation from the devil who is, for a brief comic moment, the one who acts most diligently. As the 'devil' within the image slides from embodying the explicit faults of the existing church to embodying comically the standards it should be trying to achieve (from a Protestant point of view), Latimer invites his audience and especially its clerical members into an affective response that turns laughable deformity in on the self. The comic potential of thinking about one's clerical self as, in one sense, more deformed than the devil – rather than as a supporter of Christ's ultimate victory – is a particularly powerful irony.

Latimer's capacity to encourage a sense of community around laughable deformities is not always at the expense of the clergy or the Roman church. A final example, from another sermon before King Edward VI, March 22, 1549, shows him criticizing magistrates who take bribes with a bizzare and moderately amusing image. A citizen of London has been invited for breakfast by his friend but warned beforehand that he will only get 'A pudding, and nothing else'. The man replies to his friend: 'you cannot please me better; of all meats, that is for mine own tooth; you may draw me round about the town with a pudding'. The idea, of course, is that 'bribing magistrates and judges follow gifts faster than the fellow would the pudding' (140). Latimer is activating scorn here and he is implicitly othering certain behaviours at one level. Yet, even in the midst of it, the political community being produced through his rhetoric of jesting also creates avenues of identification with potentially self-referring deformities (far from laughable depending on the context). In part the success of that community requires a member of the audience to see the contrariness of the deformity they are laughing at as the kind of thing that they are susceptible to. This jesting rhetoric, from the 1540s, involves an emotional and moral structure distinct from those we have seen in the early 1600s, those of Donne and Hall, in which rhetorical community is built around an English congregation asked to laugh together at the 'deformed' foreignness of Catholicism.

To turn now to Thomas Adams (1583-1652) is to return to that Jacobean religious context of Donne, Hall, and Andrewes. Thomas Adams was a virulently anti-Catholic 'Calvinist episcopalian', though with a certain amount of sympathy for ideas that some puritans advocated.[47] He was friends with John Donne and held lectureships in various city parishes, occasionally preaching too at Paul's Cross. Adams's colourful satiric rhetoric has been acknowledged along with its creative use of several literary tropes, especially, for example, the Theophrastian character.[48] Adams's is a style of jesting whose ecclesiological context contrasts with Latimer's but whose rhetorical structures are reminiscent of him. Adams enjoys not only the creation of vivid multi-layered images of laughable deformity for his audience to engage with, like Latimer's jest about the sleepy-parishioner, but also complex allegorical fables akin to Latimer's jest about the devil as the most diligent bishop.

Often, he deploys his vivid 'laughable' images in the service of straightforwardly scorning Catholic 'deformities'. Consider this example from Adams's *Mysticall Bedlam: Or, The World of Mad-men*:

> Come you into their Temples, and behold their pageants, and histrionicall gestures, bowings, mowings, windings, and turnings; …Behold the masse-Priest with his baked god, towzing, toffing, and dandling it, to and fro, upward and downward, backward and forward, till at last, the jest turning into earnest, he chops it into his mouth at one bitte; …would you not thinke them ridiculously madde?[49]

This is a virulent anti-Catholicism that Latimer perhaps never quite needs.

At times, Adams jests with less explicit anti-Catholicism. In *The Good Politician Directed*, he paints a comically grotesque image of the corrupted human world as a 'deformed witch', before asking his listeners/readers 'Is this your Paramour, O ye worldlings?'[50] The laughable image might involve implicit anti-Catholicism given the tendency of Adams's contemporaries to gender Church identities as feminine, yet it is explicitly placed in the service of self-reference.[51]

The dually anti-Catholic but self-referring laughable deformity, however, is most developed in the following two examples, which create or rewrite comic fables, as Latimer had done, into images of a self-cannibalizing body-politic, which readers/listeners might relate to at various levels. In *The Fire of Contention*, Adams retells the fable of the wolf, the fox, and the ass from *Poenitentiarius Asini* (the Ass's Confessor): 'The Wolfe confesseth himselfe to the Foxe, who easily absolveth him. The Foxe doth the like to the Wolfe, and receiveth the like favour'. Of course, when the Ass confesses his fault 'that being hungry he had taken out one strawe from the sheafe of a Pilgrime to *Rome*' he is devoured by the others.[52] As we immediately learn, the wolf stands for the Pope, the fox for his ministers, and the ass for the laity. No less anti-Catholic than Adams's other jests, nonetheless it opens a space for audience identification by virtue of representing an illegitimate (deformed) relationship between clergy and laity that will be potentially relevant to any Christian audience.

Levels of potential identification are much more developed in this, final, example. At the end of *The Barren Tree*, Adams retells a comic tale, a 'smart invention', which begins with the image of a reconciled pope and emperor, who bring the 'states of the world' before them. First a 'counseller of State' says '*I advise you two*', after which a 'Courtier' comes and says '*I flatter you three*', after which 'a Husbandman, *I feede you foure*', 'a Merchant, *I Couzen you five*', 'a Lawyer, *I rob you sixe*', 'a Soldier, *I fight for you seven*', 'a Physician, *I kill you eight*', and lastly, 'a Priest, *I absolve you all nine*'.[53] This is clearly meant as a laughable image of deformed social order. It is a negative example of many levels of potential moral deformity. It is anti-Catholic. However, it is not an image that Adams would expect his listeners to laugh at from some stance of total superiority because he reads into it several layers of self-referring potential. A few lines on, the message comes out: 'let the Counseller advise, the Iudge censure…the Merchant trafficke, the Lawyer plead, the Souldier beare Armes, the Divine preache; all bring forth the fruits of righteousness: that this kingdome may flourish, and be an exemplary encouragement to our neighbours'.[54] Adams

wants his audience to see in the image's deformity their own capacity for it too. Laughter is central to that recognition.

To identify the multilayered self-referring nature of some of the laughable deformities in early modern pulpit jesting is to bring further nuance to our understanding of a kind of rhetoric too often defined merely in terms of scorn and superiority. On the contrary, the range of pulpit jests created a range of emotional tones on a spectrum running from sorrow and pain to joy. Laughter and sorrow strive not so much as opposites but as extents: the jest *turns* into earnest. In Latimer's rhetoric, too, painful thoughts about the socio-spiritual order can be made comic by contrast with pain-*inducing* rhetorical modes: ordinarily, being associated with the devil could not be more serious. Archbishop William Laud, addressing the jeering observers awaiting his execution, cracks an earnest jest: 'I am going apace, as you see, towards the red sea, and my feet are on the very brinks of it'.[55] Laud's quip reminds us of the tales of Thomas More's jesting on route to the block, for instance, the one about the 'innocence' of that part of his beard that had grown since his indictment.[56] Where a jest might be placed on the joy-sorrow spectrum depends as much on the laugher's own personal context as its rhetorical structure. Nonetheless, pulpit jests do not simply retreat into non-serious play space. Their comedy lifts suddenly and joyously the extent of sorrow one might ordinarily feel toward things that are not right with the world even as they dwell on that deformity. If pulpit jesting is a relatively pleasurable step back from the full intensity of salvation's serious business, it is no less a part of that seriousness, for being a step back, than the rest of a sermon's rhetoric.

[1] A clear indication of the strength and richness of this field is given by *The Oxford Handbook of The Early Modern Sermon*, eds Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, Emma Rhatigan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[2] See Raymond A. Anselment, *'Betwixt Jest and Earnest': Marprelate, Milton, Marvell, Swift and the Decorum of Religious Ridicule* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), and Horton Davies, *Like angels from a cloud: the English metaphysical preachers, 1588–1645* (San Marino: Huntingdon Library, 1986).

[3] See Chris Holcomb, *Mirth Making: the Rhetorical Discourse on Jesting in Early Modern England*, (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2001), pp. 46-65. See also the unpublished PhD thesis: Joanna Brizdle Lipking, *The Traditions of the Facetiae and their Influence in Tudor England* (PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1970), which contains a useful discussion of the jests in Latimer's preaching, pp. 386-407.

[4] For the association of Adams with Latimer, see Davies, p. 175.

[5] Keith Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', *TLS* January 21 (1977) (pp. 77-81) 79.

[6] J.W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries: A Study of English Sermons 1450—c.1600* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), p. 142.

[7] See Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 147-163.

[8] Hunt, pp. 155-156.

[9] Hunt, pp. 148-151.

[10] James Rigney, 'Sermons into Print', in *The Oxford Handbook of The Early Modern Sermon*, pp. 198-212, (200-201).

[11] Quoted in John Craig, 'Sermon Reception', in *The Oxford Handbook of The Early Modern Sermon*, pp. 178-197, (178-179).

[12] Thomas Adams, *The White Devill or The Hypocrite Vncased*, fourth impression, (London, 1615), p. A4v.

[13] Skinner, for instance, shows in great detail the longevity of the early modern association of laughter with 'scorn': see Quentin Skinner, 'Hobbes and the Classical Theory of Laughter', in *Leviathan after 350 Years* eds Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 139-66. See also, Indira Ghose, 'Shakespeare and the ethics of laughter' in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Ethics* eds Patrick Gray and John D. Cox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 56-75 (65.)

[14] Witness the distinction in Anselment's title: *Betwixt Jest and Earnest*. Also, see Michael Mulkay, *On Humour: Its Nature and Place in Modern Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 197-219.

[15] Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell, *Loeb Classical Library* (1995; Rpt. Cambridge: MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999), chapter V (1449a).

[16] Cicero, *De Oratore*, ed. and trans. E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham, *Loeb Classical Library*, in 2 vols. (1942; Rpt. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Univeristy Press, 2001), vol 2, II. 217-289 (II.236).

[17] On that history of 'rediscovery', see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), vol. 1, pp, 349-423.

[18] 'That the ridiculous is therefore a sin and a moral fault or a kind of deformity without pain…the authority is Aristotle' (*Ridiculum igitur peccatum et turpitudinem ac deformitatem quandam esse sine dolore…auctor est Aristoteles*). See Vincenzo Maggi et Bartolomeo Lombardi, *In Aristotelis Librum de poetica communes explanationes* (Venice, 1550), p. 302.

[19] Thomas Wilson, *The Art of Rhetoric (1560)*, ed Peter Medine (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 165.

[20] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed Geoffrey Shepherd, revised R.W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 112.

[21] See Mary Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons, 1558-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 161

[22] See Joseph Hall, *The Works of the Right Reverend Father in God Joseph Hall*, ed Josiah Pratt, 10 vols. (London, 1808), vol. 5, p. 258.

[23] See Davies' quotation of the passage in *Like angels from a cloud*, pp. 318-19.

[24] John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, eds George R Potter and Evelyn Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953-1962), vol. 7, p. 196.

[25] Lancelot Andrewes, *XCIV Sermons* (London, 1629), p. 240.

[26] For a discussion of other anti-Puritan sermons in relation to anti-Catholic sermons see Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross Sermons*, pp. 191-221.

[27] For a representative example, see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986).

[28] *Nihil enim sub Lunae globo adeo perfectum est, ut omni careat vitio*, Maggi (Maddius) et Lombardi, *In Aristotelis Librum*, p. 305.

[29] Plato, *Philebus*, trans. J.C.B. Gosling (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 47-50 (48c-50b).

[30] See *Hamlet*, 3.2.20, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. second edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

[31] See Desiderius Erasmus, *Moriae Encomium, The Praise of Folly* trans. Clarence H. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

[32] M.A. Screech, *Laughter at the Foot of the Cross* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 68-77.

[33] This is a gloss on two lines of an Horatian epistle and appears in the anonymous book *Master Broughtons Letters*, (London, 1599), p. 41.

[34] Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter* (*Traité Du Ris*), trans. Gregory Rocher (University: University of Alabama Press, 1980), p. 44.

[35] For examples of such longstanding categorization, see D.H. Monro, *Argument of Laughter* (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1951), and John Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

[36] In broad terms, this is an approach to emotion and rhetoric that is being widely developed at present in reference especially to Barbara Rosenwein's *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[37] See *The Works of Hugh Latimer*, 2 vols, ed Rev. George Elwes Corrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844), vol. 1, p. 70. Subsequent parenthetical in-text references to Latimer's sermons are to this edition.

[38] As Susan Wabuda has shown, 'reformers took the office of preaching, which until recently had been only a single strand of the bishop's role, and expanded it so that it eclipsed every other aspect of his duties. See: *Preaching During the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 87.

[39] Wabuda, *Preaching*, p. 26.

[40] The tale is number 27 in that collection: see *A Hundred Merry Tales and Other English Jestbooks of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, ed. P.M. Zall (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977) p. 91.

[41] Holcomb, *Mirth Making*, p. 59.

[42] Holcomb, *Mirth Making*, p. 59.

[43] John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1563), RSTC 11222, p. 1071.

[44] From 'Stowe's Memoranda': see *Three Fifteenth-Century Century Chronicles, with Historical Memoranda by John Stowe*, ed. James Gairdner (Camden Society, 1880), p. 133.

[45] The manuscript is BL Harley 6395. For a print edition see: *"Merry Passages and Jeasts": A Manuscript Jestbook of Sir Nicholas Le Strange (1603-1655)*, ed. H.F. Lippincott (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1974).

[46] See Lippincott, *"Merry Passages and Jeasts"*, p. 19 (jest no. 12), p. 24 (jest no. 36).

[47] See the discussion in J. Sears McGee, 'Adams, Thomas (1583–1652)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2012 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/131, accessed 17 May 2016]

[48] See McGee, 'Adams, Thomas' as well as Moira P. Baker, 'Thomas Adams' in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 151, ed. Clayton D. Lein (Detroit: Gale Rsearch Inc., 1995), pp. 5-6.

[49] See *The Works of Thomas Adams* (London, 1629), p. 508.

[50] Adams, *Works*, pp. 831-32.

[51] One might note, as exemplary, John Donne's *Satire III*.

[52] Adams, *Works*, p. 795.

[53] Adams, *Works*, p. 968.

[54] Adams, *Works*, p. 968.

[55] See *England's black Tribunall* (London, 1660), p. 73.

[56] For a recent discussion linking More's jesting to the theological virtue of 'hope', see Ann Lake Prescott, 'The Ambivalent Heart: Thomas More's Merry Tales', *Criticism* 45.4 (2003) (pp. 417-433).